25 YEARS
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Coraline (review)

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Friedman, Robin *Nothing.* Flux, 2008 [216p]
Paper ed. ISBN 978-0-7387-1304-5 $9.95
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 7-10

Although seventeen-year-old Parker Rabinowitz doesn't look Jewish, he is the poster child for *tikkun olam*, a Hebrew concept that means repairing the world. He's been building his stellar resume of good works and academic excellence since elementary school, partly because he wants to do good in the world, but mostly because he wants to impress his father. His perfection has taken a toll, however: Parker is bulimic. The story of the days leading up to a bulimia-induced seizure is told through the alternating perspectives of Parker and his younger sister, Danielle, who feels invisible behind the blinding light that is her brother. Although the details of the disease's escalation are highlighted, including Parker's increased number of purges per day, his tendency to hoard and hide food, and his excessive exercise, the emotional tenor does not always ring true. Clearly, he is overscheduled, under stress, and in desperate need of claiming control over some part of his life, but this is never emphasized as the proximate cause of his disorder. Instead, about halfway through the narrative, he begins to make random comments about being fat; as his appearance has never been an issue for anyone but his sister, who continually mentions how heartbreakingly handsome he is to her friends, this new obsession feels like a flaw in the storytelling rather than a failure of insight on Parker's part. Add to that the introduction of his father's breast cancer and you have a rather clumsy and ham-fisted attempt to call attention to the gendered stereotypes that accompany certain diseases, just in case you missed the point with Parker himself. Despite these flaws, however, this exploration of an underserved topic opens an important conversation, and Parker emerges as an achingly sympathetic character; readers will understand Danielle's jealousy and fall for her brother nonetheless. KC

Gaiman, Neil *Coraline;* ad. and illus. by P. Craig Russell. HarperCollins, 2008 186p
Library ed. ISBN 978-0-06-082544-7 $19.89
Trade ed. ISBN 978-0-06-082543-0 $18.99 R* Gr. 4-7

This graphic-novel adaptation of Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* (BCCB 11/02) retains all of the tension and mystery of the novel while adding a remarkable visual layer to the story. Coraline, often dissatisfied and easily bored, is at least willing to give her new apartment building a good exploration before deciding whether she likes it. As she searches, she meets her vaguely interesting neighbors, but more intriguing is a door in her own flat that, when opened, leads Coraline into a strange world that mirrors her own. Coraline's "other mother," who controls the parallel world, indulgently offers her exciting foods, toys, and adventures, but things turn from delightful to horrific when she requires Coraline's eternal love and commitment in return. As Coraline challenges the evil force, the perfect world falls away, exposing the pathetic creatures under the other mother's thrall and the hastily constructed artificial setting that crumbles easily under scrutiny. It's Russell's visual depictions of scenes like these that make this adaptation so compelling: the illustrative representation of the other world, which becomes flatter and more crudely drawn the further Coraline gets from the other mother, is stunningly creepy. Panels, illustrated in full color, change shape and configuration to effectively establish the unhurried pace of the novel. Russell uses the art to considerable effect, tucking memorable

details that are not part of his text into the frames and inviting readers to linger and soak in the surrealism. Fans of the original novel with its more occasional yet still atmospheric artwork will likely find this distinct enough to justify exploring a second take on the story. AS

García, Cristina *I Wanna Be Your Shoebox.* Simon, 2008 198p
ISBN 978-1-4169-3928-3 $16.99 Ad Gr. 6-9

Yumi Ruíz-Hirsch's identity is a patchwork of ethnicities and interests. Daughter of a successful novelist mother and an unsuccessful songwriter/punk-rocker father, she divides her time between her mother's Cuban family, which includes an aunt who is adopting a baby from Guatemala, and her father's family, consisting of her Japanese grandmother, Jewish grandfather, and her English bulldog. She's crushed when she learns that her grandfather, Saul, has only a few months to live, and that her mother is moving her away from the beach, L.A., and her father to Napa Valley. Busy as she is, the most precious times in her life are those spent listening to Saul tell the story of his life. Through his tale of love and loss, resilience and reconciliation, she learns that disappointments happen to everybody, and the goal is to put your best foot out there and keep plugging away. There are aspects of a compelling family story here, but Yumi's character, as well as the prose used to develop it, is straightforward and pedestrian, chock full of multi-sensory description but lacking in any emotional pull, metaphor, or resonance that would draw readers in. Saul is actually a more compelling character, but he waxes preachy and clichéd in his attempts to turn the story of his life into a meaningful legacy for his granddaughter. Readers thus get a documentary-like account of a tween girl's objectively interesting and momentous year, including an account of a life that spans the twentieth century, without establishing a truly empathetic bond. However, both Yumi's and Saul's stories catalog believably representative experiences of contemporary lives and connections in a global society. KC

Gifford, Peggy *Moxy Maxwell Does Not Love Writing Thank-You Notes;* illus. with photographs by Valorie Fisher. Schwartz & Wade, 2008 [176p]
Library ed. ISBN 978-0-375-94552-6 $15.99
Trade ed. ISBN 978-0-375-84270-2 $12.99
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 3-5

If there is to be a domestic explosion in the Maxwell household, ten-year-old Moxy is bound to be the detonator. Readers who've been introduced to Moxy's dual tendencies toward procrastination and wild scheming (*Moxy Maxwell Does Not Love* Stuart Little, BCCB 7/07) will anticipate the coming blast when her mother issues a new ultimatum: write all Christmas thank-you notes tonight or forego the trip to California to see her father tomorrow. Enlisting (well, ordering) the assistance of stepsister Pansy, friend Sam, and sort-of-babysitter Uncle Jayne, Moxy devises a plan to shortcut letter-writing tedium with the forbidden use of her stepfather's new photocopier and some equally taboo spray paint and, naturally, wreaks pandemonium, for which she graciously declines to blaming her long-suffering mother. Children charmed by Gifford's first title will welcome the return of twin brother Mark's illustrative black-and-white photographs and the comically anachronistic formality of the chapter headings, which raise Moxy's antics to high drama. Underneath the snortworthy mayhem runs a new current that hints subtly but persistently at a serious backstory—Moxy's father is as unable to follow through on obligations